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Jennifer Shackett

Iowa State University

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A Peek At Something Different: Complementary Medicine at SAVMA 2001

JENNIFER SHACKETT[†]

Students interested in learning more about complementary modalities of treatment in veterinary medicine were provided with ample opportunity at SAVMA Symposium 2001. Lectures and wetlabs were presented that introduced audiences and participants to some basic techniques and theories in three rapidly emerging areas: chiropractic therapy, massage and rehabilitation therapy, and acupuncture.

Dr. Pedro Rivera of the Healing Oasis Wellness Center provided instruction about chiropractic and massage therapy. He explained that the main purpose of these modalities is to optimize health and allow for quicker healing times from injury or surgery, and that they should not in any way replace conventional therapy.

"Chiropractic," as explained by Dr. Rivera, "deals with primary biomechanical changes which will cause secondary neurological problems via direct or indirect nerve compression." He explained that misalignment of joint surfaces can lead to altered nerve transmission and that slight changes in the articular surfaces of joints can sometimes have adverse affects on the health of an animal. He stressed that adjustments should feel good to the patient.

Dr. Rivera most commonly uses his massage techniques in order to augment treatment for tight and contracted tendons, ligament and muscle injuries, chronic inflammatory conditions, scar tissue, and edema. He explained the therapeutic mechanisms of massage, which include increased blood flow and lymphatic drainage along with a "cascade of neuromuscular changes."

During the wetlabs, Dr. Rivera demonstrated a chiropractic adjustment and al-



Dr. Pedro Rivera demonstrates therapeutic massage techniques to vet students during a wetlab.

Jim Fosse, ISU Biocommunications

lowed students to practice some basic massage techniques on volunteer dogs, many of whom began to fall asleep with the pampering. The benefits and dangers of ultrasound as a therapeutic tool were discussed.

The guest speaker on veterinary acupuncture was Dr. Elaine Caplan. She is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, a diplomate of the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, a member of the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association, and Certified by the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society. Dr. Caplan explained that acupuncture utilizes a systems view of medicine, in which the integrated whole cannot be reduced to parts. Acupuncture is based on a theory of patterns of Qi, or energy, which produce disease when in disharmony. Some of the mod-

[†]Jennifer Shackett is a first-year student at Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

ern, scientific theories on the efficacy of acupuncture were discussed as well as indications for acuthery. These include alleviation of adverse side effects of drugs used to treat certain conditions; disease states that are refractory to treatment, such as epilepsy or atopy; poor surgical candidates; and those animals of clients that simply prefer "natural" alternative treatment. Dr. Caplan repeatedly stressed that ancillary diagnostics should be carried out as usual to arrive at a definitive diagnosis, if possible, and that acuthery is most often carried out in conjunction with medication or surgery or as part of post-operative care. Dr. Caplan has treated a variety of disorders including dermatologic disorders such as lick granulomas and atopy as well as respiratory, neurologic, reproductive, and musculoskeletal diseases, among others.

"I have had great luck with cervical non-surgical disc problems," Caplan said.

When asked about the demand for acupuncture services, Dr. Caplan said she has to limit the number of acuthery patients she will accept in order to preserve time in her schedule for her surgical patients. In addition to the small animal patients with which she is more familiar, she also works

with area equine veterinarians in treating horses, most often for lamenesses that have not responded to conventional treatment.

Dr. Caplan led a wetlab that included some examples of clinical cases that responded well to acuthery. She also included demonstrations on a horse and a dog. The dog is a regular visitor to the ISU teaching hospital who receives acupuncture for his degenerative joint disease and arthritis from Dr. Karen Kline. Dr. Kline, assistant professor in the Department of Clinical Sciences, was certified by the IVAS in 1999 and is now acting as staff acupuncturist at the ISU teaching hospital. She sees an average of five or six patients a month for acupuncture treatment. Dr. Kline notes that geriatric animals and dogs with non-surgical neck pain or arthritis seem to respond the most favorably to acupuncture treatment.

"The results of acupuncture by far have been encouraging, but this depends on patient selection and the correct diagnosis," said Dr. Kline.

Patients can be referred to Dr. Kline for acupuncture services by their primary veterinarians. Additionally, some clients contact the teaching hospital directly regarding acuthery.◆

Q. What do you think about Iowa?

"It's cold!"

--Tabby Franklin, Oklahoma State University:

"It's ok. Cold, breezy...I liken it a little bit to Montana."

--Fred Robinson, Washington State University

"I've never been to the midwest, so obviously it's a whole different atmosphere. People are very friendly, open and welcoming. I'm glad I came."

--Lexi Stein, University of Pennsylvania

"Everybody's been really friendly...nice town, nice school."

--Maralyn Wusty, Tuskegee University

"Our whole group had a discussion about how we like all the artwork on the walls at the vet med building...The colors are very bright and uplifting. At Ohio State we have nothing on the wall...We also liked the anatomy display cases."

--Julie Ann Walden, Ohio State University